Flora of the Otway Plain and Ranges 1. Orchids, Irises, Lilies, Grass-trees, Mat-rushes and other petaloid monocotyledons

by Enid Mayfield

Publisher: *Linton Press, Geelong, 2006. 219 pages, paperback; colour illustrations. ISBN 0977571203. RRP $45.00*

This book will be a delight to use for people interested in the native plants that occur in the floristically rich Otway region that extends west of Melbourne to as far as Portland. It is an area that to date has not received its own flora treatment. Many of the plants included are among Victoria's most rare and endangered.

The first volume includes over 130 species of orchids, as well as a full treatment of members of the iris and lily families, grass-trees and mat-rushes. A second volume, already in preparation, will cover the herbaceous and shrubby dicotyledons.

The book is both a flora and a field guide. For every plant you will find all the information you expect in such publications. The essence of this book, however, is that it is visual: even the several keys use pictures to impart crucial information. Complex taxonomic concepts are explained by the use of clear illustrations. Each species is described in accessible language, and technical terms are explained in an illustrated glossary. Integral to the descriptions are coloured drawings of the key features of each species. Unique for this type of work is the inclusion of illustrations of the insect pollinators, fruits, seeds and root systems.

The author is Enid Mayfield, a botancial artist who enjoys a high reputation for her exact and exquisite scientific illustrations. Her work is informed by her meticulous observation of the form of the plants, and extensive fieldwork backed by examination of relevant literature. Essential for her work were the *Flora of Victoria* and *A census of the vascular plants of Victoria*, both produced by the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. Most of the plants illustrated in this book were drawn from live specimens collected in the field by Mayfield after examination of herbarium records to determine where species occurred. In the few instances where a species proved elusive she used herbarium specimens to prepare her painting, in itself an exacting task.

Throughout, Mayfield consulted taxonomic botanists at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, experts in particular groups of plants, naturalists with local knowledge of her study area and entomologists at Museum Victoria. The book is a testament to the spirit of collaboration that exists in the community of people interested in Victoria's natural history.

The rigorous scientific basis of Mayfield's work has come to fruition in preparation of this *Flora*; the depth of her scholarship will be apparent to those who use the book. It is delight to look at, scientifically accurate, accessible and will be welcomed by many, not just those interested in the flora of the Otway plain and Ranges.

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